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ABSTRACT

This final report of the Review and Assessment Committee reviews the 5-year history of the Commission on Preservation and Access, a private, nonprofit organization that works through existing institutions and groups to foster, develop, and support collaboration among libraries and allied organizations in order to ensure the preservation of the published and documentary record in all formats, and to provide enhanced access to these records. The first two of four sections in this report present an assessment of progress in preservation in the nation over the past 5 years, a discussion of the continuing need for preservation activities, and the major issues of the future of preservation. The third section reviews and assesses the role of the commission, with particular attention to the identification of those areas of preservation in which the commission can be most effective in promoting the interests of the national library and archival community. The fourth section presents 20 recommendations for directions the commission should take in the future. (MAB)

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COMMISSION ON PRESERVATION AND ACCESS

REPORT

REVIEW AND ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE

FINAL REPORT

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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September 26, 1991

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September 26, 1991

Mr. Billy Frye, Chairman
Board of Directors
Commission on Preservation and Access
1785 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

Dear Billy,

The Review and Assessment Committee which you established in December 1990 to review the first five years of the work of the Commission on Preservation and Access has completed its work and is pleased to submit its report. We have found the task to be both demanding and satisfying and hope that it will prove helpful to the Commission as it pursues its own most demanding tasks.

Please note that the organization of the report adheres fairly closely to the outline of your original charge to the Committee, a structure which we found useful in organizing the fairly massive materials which we accumulated.

We all want to take this opportunity to thank you, the Commission staff, and our many sources of information for exceptional help and support.

Respectfully submitted,

David H. Stam, Chair
Review and Assessment Committee

cc: Patricia Battin

COMMISSION ON PRESERVATION AND ACCESS

REVIEW AND ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE

FINAL REPORT

September 26, 1991

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INTRODUCTION

Until a few years ago, efforts toward preserving those records that document humanity's cultural heritage were largely local and unsystematic. Today an increasing number of institutions and governments, in the United States and abroad, are supporting carefully planned programs to rescue endangered materials and ensure their availability for posterity. The many concerned and dedicated individuals who share responsibility for these programs are well aware that the task is only beginning, that despite two decades of intense development much remains to be done. They also recognize that an effective worldwide preservation effort depends on the good will of everyone involved--from government and institutional policy makers, to the preservation and conservation officers and practitioners who oversee and perform the actual work of preservation, to the individual users whose concern for preservation is essential if the developing programs are to succeed. In continuing the effort to preserve the cultural heritage, the entire community of scholars, librarians, archivists, conservators, and administrators must not lose the spirit of cooperation and persistence that has made the present accomplishments possible.

Since its founding in 1986, the Commission on Preservation and Access has played a significant role in both national and international preservation activities and in fostering that spirit of cooperation. Its role has included elements of coordination, public relations, promotion, stimulation, and program development.

For a newly formed and evolving organization, it is often difficult to evaluate and appreciate internally the impact and direction of its activities. Consequently, in December 1990 the Board of Directors of the Commission established an external Review and Assessment Committee to provide an independent review of the Commission's five-year history, an assessment of its accomplishments and shortcomings, and recommendations for continued activities and potential new directions. The charge given to the Committee by the Board was a comprehensive and demanding one:

> Assess the progress in preservation in the nation over the past five years;
>
> Assess the continuing need for preservation activities--identify the major issues for the future: Which are most tractable? Which are most essential?
>
> Within this context, review and assess the role of the Commission with particular attention to identifying those areas of preservation in which the Commission can be most effective in promoting the interests of the national library and archival community. This assessment should not only inform the Commission about its proper purview but help it improve its modus operandi.
>
> Recommend directions for future Commission activities.

From the beginning of its work, the Committee had excellent support from both the Board and the staff of the Commission, while

having complete freedom to form independent judgments about the work of the Commission and its future directions, if any. Since the Commission's Bylaws contain a provision for the possible dissolution of the Corporation (Article XIII), the option of dissolution was necessarily considered by the Committee; it was in fact one motivation for this review. We should report at the outset that in our extensive consultations, interviews, and deliberations, we found no advocates of dissolution; on the contrary, we found many recommendations for considerably expanded activities.

A useful framework for our work has been the list of purposes of the Commission as outlined in Article II of its Bylaws:

A. To foster, develop and support systematic and purposeful collaboration among all libraries, archives and allied organizations in order to insure the preservation of the published and documentary record in all formats and to provide enhanced access to scholarly information.

B. To develop and carry out the collaborative plans and procedures that will enable libraries and preservation specialists to expand and integrate present work.

C. To promote participation of all disciplines and encourage support by involved and interested academic and professional organizations.

D. To encourage technical and other research on topics of importance to the preservation effort.

E. To establish a system to gather and analyze information about all aspects of preservation activity.

F. To ensure that access to preserved materials is efficient and supportive of research and scholarship.

G. To build and maintain effective communication with key organizations and to promote and encourage the institutional adoption of sound preservation policies and practices.

H. To do any and all lawful acts that may be necessary, useful, suitable, or proper for the furtherance or accomplishment of the purposes of the Commission.

In attempting to assess the achievements, failures, or omissions of the Commission in the light of these purposes, the Committee cast as wide a net as possible. We have interviewed in person or by telephone dozens of individuals and groups, including most members of the Commission's National Advisory Committee on Preservation, many preservation administrators and several librarians from institutions affiliated with the Association of Research Libraries, as well as several officers of that organization. We have held hearings with the ARL Committee on Preservation of Library Materials, and, at the American Library Association's annual meeting, with the Preservation Administrators Discussion Group and the Chief Collection Development Officers of

Large Research Libraries. We have also met with preservation officers of the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Library of Congress, with the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, and with the Board of Directors and staff of the Commission itself. Comments were invited through the Commission's Newsletter from its recipients generally, and more specifically from all constituents of the American Council of Learned Societies and from a large number of scientific societies which might have interests in preservation of the historical record, past, present, or future.

The information and opinions obtained through these interviews, hearings, and written commentary were analyzed and discussed at length by the Committee during four meetings and a number of conference calls. We found the responses from these many individuals and groups to be consistently helpful. Even when critical of the Commission's work, those interviewed revealed a deep interest in and concern for library preservation generally and specifically with the Commission's programs, frequently expressing a desire to see an expansion of current activities. Although the Committee drew heavily on these sources and gave careful consideration to divergent views expressed, the analysis and recommendations which follow are solely a reflection of Committee opinion and consensus.

PROGRESS IN PRESERVATION, 1986-1991

Assessing the progress in preservation over the past five years has been difficult, partly because quantitative data on activities in the preceding twenty years are inadequate, but primarily because recent activity has frequently built upon initiatives that were well underway when the Commission was founded in 1986. In fact, the existence of the Commission itself is a tribute to early efforts by the Association of Research Libraries, the Library of Congress, the Council on Library Resources, the Center for Research Libraries, the Research Libraries Group, and other organizations which over a period of more than twenty years have attempted to find ways to concentrate national attention on a major national problem.

Whatever the causes, the evidence of greatly expanded activity during the past five years is compelling. Perhaps the most dramatic change is in the widespread growth of public awareness of the preservation problem, aided by such films as Slow Fires and Turning to Dust, and the now regular stream of media coverage of local, regional, and national preservation topics. The scholarly community, as represented by many members of the American Council of Learned Societies and other groups, has also become engaged in preservation issues. The Commission's various scholarly advisory committees have also helped to engage specific scholarly groups in the issues of preservation, particularly selection for preservation.

Libraries of every type and size have become more aware of their threatened collections, not only of documents on paper but in all informational formats. During this period, the Association of Research Libraries has considerably expanded its preservation activities, reflecting the increase in activities of its member libraries. Several of the Association's libraries have developed local preservation programs using the methodology of its Preservation Planning Program, and the Association itself has recently published annual statistics of member preservation activity as well as Preservation Program Models: A Study Project and Report (1991). The number of full-time preservation administrators in ARL libraries increased to a total of 52 in 1991, as contrasted with only three or four in 1971. The American Library Association also developed its own preservation policy in 1991 for use by all of its constituents, another example of the spread of preservation consciousness in all types of libraries.

The 1986 publication of Brittle Books by the Council on Library Resources was both timely and prophetic. Although a blueprint for organizing national preservation activity and not a plea for a particular program (as its misleading title suggests), this publication not only led to the creation of the Commission on Preservation and Access but also anticipated and influenced the National Endowment for the Humanities' Brittle Books program. The amount of federal funds available for preservation under this program has now quintupled, and many libraries, including members

of the Committee on Institutional Cooperation and of the Research Libraries Group, have received grants under this program. By the end of the period under review (June 1991), over 370,000 volumes have been reproduced or contracted for filming.

Increased NEH funding enabled a dramatic increase in microfilming activity and thus a need for expanded microfilming services. Already anticipating this need, the Mid Atlantic Preservation Service (MAPS) had earlier been launched with foundation funding as a regional center for high quality and reasonably priced filming of brittle books and other archival materials, joining existing commercial and institutional facilities that were already providing microfilming services. In 1990, MAPS was acquired by the Online Computer Library Center to provide those services nationally, giving special emphasis to the filming standards required by the NEH for its micropreservation program.

With funding from various local, federal, and commercial sources a great deal of work in the development of bibliographic access to microfilm collections has been accomplished. International alliances have also been developed, with the Mellon Foundation being most instrumental in helping make available in North America bibliographic information about microform masters and micropreservation activity in Britain and France. Expanded international communication also revealed extensive preservation activity abroad, particularly but not exclusively in Europe. That

activity included the early stages of development of a European Register of Microform Masters, prompted by the emerging European Community and modelled on the National Register of Microform Masters to which it will eventually be linked.

Concurrently, in 1990 federal legislation requiring use of alkaline paper in government publications was passed and soon thereafter several states followed suit. Work with trade publishers also yielded a number of commitments for publishing hard copy editions on acid-free paper, while paper manufacturers were moving by environmental necessity toward expanded production of alkaline paper.

Most significantly this period has seen a dramatic increase in research and publication on preservation issues. The Library of Congress, the National Archives and Records Administration, and the National Library of Medicine have all pursued research and publication on preservation matters, and the Commission itself has sponsored over $1 million in research contracts and published many reports on these studies.

Despite the evident progress there have been disappointments. The encouraging promise of the Conservation/Preservation Program of New York State, founded in 1984, has not been significantly followed by other states. Local institutional funding of preservation has not, as far as we could determine, increased

significantly, and immediate prospects for increases from those sources are fairly poor. Educational programs for conservators and preservation administrators have not developed as well or extensively as had been hoped five or more years ago. Some research questions such as those surrounding deacidification and use of optical technology as a preservation medium have not been resolved and are complicated by commercial considerations.

The foregoing paragraphs are not intended as comprehensive listings of the growth of preservation activities and concerns over the past five years. The impressive record of growth, however, does suggest a solid foundation on which the next five years can build.

CONTINUING NEEDS AND MAJOR ISSUES

In spite of, and in large part because of, the recent expansion of the field of library preservation, there is today heightened national and institutional awareness of the magnitude of issues pending resolution and of the immensity of work awaiting completion. The issues are complex and multi-faceted, and in many cases no viable solution can be foreseen for the immediate future.

Recent efforts in the library world have tended to focus on the preservation of and access to printed materials, with priority given to books that have already deteriorated to the stage where reformatting is necessary to preserve the information they contain. Less emphasis has to date been placed on the conservation of manuscripts, archives, and rare books as artifacts, and relatively little attention has been directed toward preservation of the rapidly proliferating non-print materials that document recent history--films, video tapes, recorded sound, photographs, and information stored in electronic form. To this list could well be added the preservation of prints and drawings and the entire range of artifacts that exist in museums and special collections.
Library preservation concerns may well begin with books, but comprehensive national efforts toward preservation and access surely must include materials in all formats.

While recognizing the desire to ensure the preservation of most if not necessarily all historically significant documents,

regardless of format, virtually all participants in the preservation enterprise also recognize the stark reality of inadequate time, personnel, and money to preserve everything of potential value. One of the most basic and difficult issues confronting the preservation field is therefore selection. Where should the emphasis be placed? To which documents should priority be assigned? This issue is fraught with controversy, not only among and within the various scholarly disciplines which include the primary users of the documents, but among those responsible for the care of the documents themselves. Some custodians argue that priority for preservation be given to unusually strong (great) collections because those collections are likely to provide the best representation of the literature in any given field. Others contend that more specific priorities can be determined by recent use and argue that priority should be assigned accordingly. (The Committee discussed this issue at length and was unanimous in its support of the former approach, believing that "use-driven" selection might be appropriate for individual institutions and their local needs, but does not provide an indication of lasting value, does not recognize capricious cycles of use, does not reflect the stated needs of the scholarly communities, and does not constitute a plan of selection in any but an aleatoric sense.)

The situation is further complicated by the international aspects of preservation planning. From the global perspective two more issues emerge: first, the need to know where and what

international preservation activities have been initiated and accomplished (and thus the need for an international data base of microforms and other preserved materials); and second, the need for an efficient and cost effective distribution system to enable potential users to have ready access to copies of reformatted materials from wherever the archival masters or the original copies may be. This is of course easier said than done, especially in light of complications resulting from copyright requirements.

Another group of issues might be categorized as "technical," such as the necessity for developing international standards that ensure compatibility of bibliographic records, for further research in developing practical, safe, and effective means for mass deacidification, for converting film to digitized formats (or vice versa), and for evaluating the effectiveness and durability of the various methods by which deteriorated documents can best be preserved, to name a few.

To identify major issues is not difficult, but to establish which are most tractable and which most essential, in the words of the Committee's charge, is difficult indeed. Virtually all of the issues discussed in this report are "essential," are of highest priority to one or another individual or group, depending on their responsibilities and their interests. Not all are equally tractable. The Committee finds, however, that among the most essential and tractable are the following: (1) While maintaining

current programs devoted to reformatting books and journals, increased emphasis must be placed on preserving archival materials and materials in non-print formats; (2) A more efficient means for storing masters and disseminating copies of reformatted materials must be developed and implemented; (3) Efforts to find solutions to those issues that fall within the category of "technical" must be continued and enhanced; (4) Programs designed to promote international cooperation in providing access to preserved materials must be pursued vigorously; (5) Institutions involved in preservation programs must recognize the limitations of federal support and must reevaluate their internal priorities while continuing to seek funding from all potential sources, including their own institutions; and (6) Increased efforts in preservation education at all levels, including decision makers, preservation administrators, technicians, and users, must be undertaken.

THE ROLE OF THE COMMISSION

In reviewing and assessing the role of the Commission, the Committee was impressed that its informants were virtually unanimous in identifying--and praising--the accomplishments of the past five years. The Commission received the highest praise for its contribution to the developing awareness of preservation concerns, both within the relevant professions and for the public at large. Acquiring prime television time for repeated screenings of Slow Fires, front page coverage in major newspapers, and the proliferation of articles in scholarly newsletters and journals have all helped to establish the issue firmly in the collective consciousness.

The Commission's support of legislative initiatives, in particular the National Endowment for the Humanities appropriations for an expanded brittle books program, also received widespread praise from all quarters. The Commission's role in fostering the use of alkaline paper and federal requirements for its use were also frequently cited.

The ability of the Commission to produce its newsletter regularly and promptly, to disseminate research findings and to issue position papers quickly at little or no cost to the user, received much favorable comment. Another widely recognized element of its accomplishments in communication of preservation information has been its work in developing closer ties to the international

library community: its reports on the status of preservation abroad, its assistance to the British Library and the Bibliothèque Nationale in conversion of their registers of microform masters to machine readable form, and its support of the formation of the European Register of Microform Masters, are seen by many as significant achievements leading toward improved scholarly access to European collections. While these links are based on long-standing ties among library communities in the United States and Europe, there was little doubt that the establishment of the Commission's International Project has added momentum to these developments.

Several comments applauded the efforts made by the Commission in exploring the issues surrounding professional preservation education, but these were tempered by a call for greater support of preservation education in various ways. Some of these comments were directed to the need for curricular or other programmatic changes in library schools. Others described the needs of preservationists for continuing education in technical matters and for management training for preservation administrators. In any case, the Commission's work in preservation education was regarded as an important element in its program.

Given the small size of the Commission staff (never more than four full-time positions), the extensive list of accomplishments was seen by some as attributable in part to its use of a

facilitating structure, employing various contractors for specific tasks. This device has allowed the Commission to mobilize needed expertise and through its contracts produce research results while allowing the small staff to be engaged in issue identification, public relations, and support of the efforts of many other groups and institutions. To date the Commission has sponsored twenty-two contracts totaling over $1 million, and has issued reports on such diverse issues as artifactual preservation, copyright, selection for preservation, and a variety of technical topics such as optical scanning, image processing, and film density readings. There was general agreement that these products of the Commission's work, though naturally viewed as somewhat uneven in quality, are important additions to the literature of preservation.

Unlike the informants' comments about the accomplishments of the Commission, the criticisms of the Commission were less uniform. They can be conveniently categorized into two major groups, criticism of the program and criticism of the Commission itself. Critical comment about the program focused on the priority given to brittle books, insufficient attention to mass deacidification, neglect of non-print formats (especially electronic media), and the absence of and need for a national strategy for preservation. Among the shortcomings of the Commission cited were failures to see preservation as a whole, to involve preservation and conservation experts in all areas of the Commission's work, and to address legislative needs for funds to be used for purposes other than

filming brittle books. Some saw the Commission as unresponsive to "local needs," and criticized the makeup of the Commission Board and its various committees.

Discussing the program, colleagues were most concerned about what they see as the narrow focus of the Commission on the microfilming of deteriorating books and its related neglect of materials in non-print formats. Some saw the microfilming program as "anti-paper," its hidden agenda designed to foster the eventuality of the electronic library, with digitized materials coming from microfilm or other sources. Some saw a lack of interest in preserving rare books or in preserving the original documents, regardless of condition or perceived importance, after filming has been completed. A few expressed concern that emphasis on the humanities, as defined by Endowment programs, caused neglect of preservation needs in scientific literature. Some frankly wondered who was and who was not being helped by the Commission's present activities.

Mostly, our respondents were concerned that the focus on brittle books limits attention to other formats that require preservation. A subsidiary part of this concern was a perception that the focus on brittle books has prevented adequate funding for preservation programs for other kinds of endangered materials, and also for funding smaller institutions with valuable print collections in specialized areas.

Concern was also expressed that the Commission's preoccupation with microfilming was to the detriment of attention given to mass deacidification and other forms of documentary preservation. The difficulty in finding and receiving copies of filmed titles within a reasonable time was also noted, and the Commission was urged to address that issue.

Several commentators offered the view that the Commission should focus its resources on the development of a national strategy for preservation. This view was generally in line with views expressed about the narrowness of the brittle books program. A national strategy was seen as making coordination, extended funding, and standardization possible. To some the Commission has been attentive primarily, if not solely, to the concerns of the larger research institutions, whose collections are seen as the basis for a "national collection." Such a focus, some feel, excludes smaller institutions which are repositories of important national historical resources.

As regards criticism of the Commission itself and its internal organization, a number of respondents (largely but not exclusively from among the preservation professionals) objected that preservation and conservation experts were not involved in any significant way in the work of the Commission, either as members of the Commission's Board or its committees. Moreover, interviews with virtually all current members of the Commission's National

Advisory Council on Preservation revealed that few members are enthusiastic about the Council as presently organized. One member called it "an extremely weak listening post," and another described it as "as close to being useless as you can get." In general, the objections to the Council were that it is an advisory council with no real advisory function, and that in any case not all members are qualified to give appropriate advice.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee has chosen to merge its response to the foregoing critique, pro and con, with its recommendations for future Commission activities and ways in which its modus operandi might be improved. What follows are the Committee's formal recommendations, each followed by comments which explain or, at times, defend the reasoning behind the recommendation. They represent those actions which, after due deliberation, the Committee believes will most enhance the work of the Commission and ultimately promote preservation of the record of human cultures.

1. THAT THE COMMISSION ON PRESERVATION AND ACCESS CONTINUE ITS EXISTENCE AND PURSUE THE PURPOSES OUTLINED IN ITS BYLAWS.

Comment: As noted in the introduction, our Committee found no advocate of dissolution of the Commission, but rather heard many recommendations for expanded activity. Some questions were raised about possible overlap between Commission activities and those of other library organizations, for example, the Association of Research Libraries and the Library of Congress. We recognize both the need for these and other organizations to be involved in preservation activities and that some inevitable overlap will occur. We would add, however, that these mutually supporting operations require further coordination and more effective communication among the involved participants in order to transcend the narrower interests of each. Despite the genuine and widespread commitment to cooperation, some inter-organizational jealousies and frustrations have developed, the collaborative intent expressed in

the Commission's Bylaws has yet to be fully realized, and much yet remains to be done in respect to that goal.

2. THAT THE COMMISSION CONTINUE TO SUPPORT EDUCATIONAL EFFORTS THAT RAISE PUBLIC AWARENESS OF THE NEED TO PRESERVE OUR CULTURAL HERITAGE.

Comment: Among the comments on the Commission's educational activities were many that expressed the need for continued efforts at public awareness, a Sisyphian task which the Committee recognizes and supports. To this end, for example, it seems time to produce a sequel to Slow Fires, focusing on the "fast fires" affecting video, film, audio, and electronic collections.

3. THAT THE COMMISSION MAINTAIN A PRACTICE OF QUINQUENNIAL REVIEW TO ASSESS COMMISSION PROGRESS AND FUTURE DIRECTION.

Comment: It may appear self-promotional for this Committee to recommend a regular process (every five years) of review and assessment. Nonetheless, we have found it an effective means of identification and analysis of issues, problems, and opinions, which might otherwise lie beneath the surface.

4. THAT SUPPORT OF NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES' BRITTLE BOOKS PROGRAM BE CONTINUED, AND EFFORTS BE MADE TO PERSUADE CONGRESS TO MAINTAIN FUNDING FOR THE PROGRAM AT CURRENT OR INCREASED LEVELS.

Comment: As noted earlier in this report, the Commission's support of legislative initiatives, especially of NEH's expanded brittle books program, received widespread praise from all quarters. Yet some of those interviewed tempered their praise, seeming to confuse

Commission programs with those of the Endowment, blaming the Commission for what they perceive as limitations in the NEH program (e.g., the emphasis on microfilming, limited funding for preservation of archives, manuscripts, and rare books; cost-sharing requirements that strain existing library budgets).

While these and other perceptions of the NEH program are clearly misinformed, they do pose some important issues, and the Commission could assist in raising these questions with the Endowment. Whatever changes the Endowment may in the future determine to make in its preservation program, the Committee believes it is crucial that programmatic changes at NEH do not occur at the expense of its most successful program. Thus we strongly recommend that the Commission continue its support of the NEH brittle books program and make every effort to persuade Congress to maintain funding at present or, when possible, increased levels.

5. THAT THE COMMISSION ASSIST LOCAL EFFORTS TO ENCOURAGE STATE AND LOCAL FUNDING FOR PRESERVATION WORK.

Comment: Lying at the heart of the dispute surrounding local versus national needs is the despair that emerges when too few resources are available for too large a task. While we support the cost sharing provisions of the NEH program (which some participants find onerous), we also believe that the Commission could assist the search for new funding through such means as contracting for the development of materials with which local groups could advise and

educate state legislative committees or by preparing background papers that could be used in discussions with local and regional foundations.

6. THAT THE COMMISSION'S INTERNATIONAL PROJECT BE CONTINUED AND ENLARGED.

Comment: One area of the Commission's activity during its first five years that has been consistently praised by our various sources is the International Project. Anyone even remotely aware of the Commission's concerns recognizes the importance of international cooperation in both preservation and access. The Commission's efforts to help develop cooperation and coordination of programs, especially in Western Europe and Latin America, have been remarkably successful.

Nevertheless, much remains to be done, not only in countries where relationships are already well developed, but in Eastern Europe, South America, the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. We therefore strongly recommend that the International Project be continued and, if possible, expanded. The ultimate goal is nothing less than an international integrated data base containing relevant bibliographic entries from all nations in the world, together with an effective system for obtaining copies of those materials. To continue to work to achieve that goal is of the highest priority.

7. THAT THE COMMISSION CONTRACT FOR A SERIES OF REPORTS ON THE COMPLEX PROBLEMS INHERENT IN PRESERVING AND MAKING NON-PRINT MATERIALS MORE ACCESSIBLE, AND CONSIDER APPOINTING A TASK FORCE IN SUPPORT OF SUCH STUDIES.

Comment: Much of the documentary record of the past half-century is recorded on film and video or audio tape, and the problems involved in preserving these non-print materials and providing access to them are fully as challenging and, for many, as critical as are the problems associated with preservation of and access to print materials. There is, moreover, good reason to believe that the demand for non-print materials will increase as we move into the next century, especially on the part of students and scholars who work in the humanities and social sciences.

For the most part these concerns have not been seen as central to the concerns of research librarians, and thus many of those who follow and participate in the work of the Commission have little awareness of the problems involved in the preservation of non-print materials. A series of reports is needed to inform the library community about the major issues involved and about existing activities of organizations that are often isolated from the library world (e.g., the National Center for Film and Video Preservation, The Film Foundation, The National Film Preservation Board, the Association of Audio Archives, the Association of Moving Image Archivists).

It may also be appropriate for the Board to appoint a standing committee or a task force on non-print materials, paralleling

existing committees on technology assessment and on text and image preservation.

8. THAT THE COMMISSION APPOINT A TASK FORCE OR CONTRACTOR TO DEVELOP PRESERVATION MAINTENANCE GUIDELINES FOR ALL NON-PAPER FORMATS.

Comment: There is still great uncertainty about how long information stored in audio, visual, and electronic media can be effectively retrieved from its original format. That uncertainty has inhibited preventive action in repositories holding such material, and until long-term preservation storage media for electronic, magnetic, and chemical (i.e. photographic) information are developed, greater efforts must be made to protect these curiously fragile materials. One clear need among archives and other repositories of such materials is practical advice on the useful lifetimes of these media and the procedures required to protect, preserve, or replace their threatened collections of audio tapes and cassettes, film, video, and electronic data.

9. THAT THE COMMISSION ACTIVELY SEEK SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEM OF DISSEMINATION OF SERVICE COPIES OF PRESERVED TITLES.

Comment: The bibliographic control of filmed titles has been carefully addressed and information about where titles are held appears to be reasonably accessible now. As the number of institutions filming brittle titles increases, access to holding information will become increasingly difficult, as will the problems of storage in individual institutions. At the present time, once a title is located, obtaining a copy within a reasonable

period of time is uncertain at best and often impossible. This situation will worsen as the number of microfilm master copies increases from under 1,000,000 to over 3,000,000 items domestically, and access to international data bases of preserved materials improves. Some solution (centralized or de-centralized) providing dependable, timely delivery of copies of these materials to the potential users must be identified and support created for its early and continuous implementation. Although the Commission has made one provisional attempt at solving this issue without success, it remains a prime desideratum of national preservation planning and efforts to find a solution are imperative.

10. THAT THE COMMISSION EXPAND ITS EXISTING ROLE IN THE INVESTIGATION OF TECHNICAL ISSUES RELATED TO PRESERVATION AND ACCESS.

Comment: Through its range of contracts for investigations and its organization of meetings on specific topics, the Commission has led the way in analysis of technical issues of concern to many groups. The published studies on alkaline paper, mass deacidification processes, image formats for preservation, and on preservation and access technology are good examples of such work. The Commission plays an exceptional role in this way, and should continue to do so. Of special interest are the application of scanning and electronic storage to preservation, software development to allow use of titles stored electronically, the optimal storage conditions for electronic tape and disk files, and eventually the development of long-term archival storage of electronic information.

11. THAT THE COMMISSION INCREASE ITS ATTENTION TO THE ISSUES INHERENT IN THE PRESERVATION OF ARCHIVES AND MANUSCRIPTS.

Comment: While many concerns related to the preservation of archive and manuscript collections have to do with the uniqueness of the materials, there are a number of transcendent issues whose investigation would aid those responsible for archival collections. Many of these issues are similar to those associated with the preservation of books, such as deacidification, filming, and bibliographic control. Closer cooperation among the archives, manuscripts, and preservation communities would improve understanding of the issues and aid in the transferability of results achieved in the field of book preservation.

12. THAT THE COMMISSION EXPAND ITS EFFORTS TO DEVELOP A STRATEGY FOR THE COORDINATED PRESERVATION OF RARE BOOKS.

Comment: One difficult issue that the Commission has begun to face is the widely felt need for the "artifactual preservation" of rare books representing many of the cultural milestones of civilization. Gutenbergs and Audubons are not necessarily unique, but they are prized and cherished by all their owners. So, too, are copies of The Bay Psalm Book, the Declaration of Independence, the 1855 Leaves of Grass, Copernicus' De Revolutionibus, and countless other examples of the printed icon. The problem is in dissociating the local institutional need to preserve the local copy from the national need to assure the preservation in the best condition of as many copies as possible of these various treasures. In 1991, the Commission began to address this issue and we recommend that

the work continue, receiving relatively high priority for further investigation and action.

13. THAT THE COMMISSION CONTINUE TO PROMOTE THE APPROPRIATE USE OF ALKALINE PAPER.

Comment: Increased production and use of alkaline paper is one of the success stories of the preservation effort. Further work will be required, however, to complete this movement in the face of opposition from recycled paper advocates. The need to extend the use of alkaline paper for essential records and documents to other parts of the world is equally important. The Committee urges the Commission to identify opportunities to create a wider international awareness of this need.

14. THAT THE COMMISSION CONTINUE TO BE INVOLVED IN DISCUSSIONS ABOUT COPYRIGHT.

Comment: As the Commission-sponsored report on "Copyright and Preservation" repeatedly pointed out, there are many remaining areas of copyright law and practice that are vague, inappropriate, and inhibitory. This is especially the case with conversion of data in electronic form, but other matters concerning conversion of other formats and their subsequent distribution are equally important. The Commission, having taken an important first step in issuing its report on copyright, should now act on the suggestions made at the end of that report and stimulate broad-gauged discussions about future action.

15. THAT THE COMMISSION DEVELOP FURTHER EDUCATIONAL EFFORTS THAT EXPAND THE UNDERSTANDING AND MANAGEMENT OF PRESERVATION ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE LIBRARY AND ARCHIVAL PROFESSIONS.

Comment: Observations on the need for professional education were directed towards three groups: students in library and information science programs, library administrators, and preservation personnel. Taken together those groups represent a significant investment in the future of preservation. Students need a firm grasp of the principles of preservation and the nature of institutional and national preservation efforts. To the extent possible, the Commission is encouraged to assist the professional schools to develop appropriate curricular elements and programs.

Administrators require a broad understanding of the issues, technologies, and costs involved in preservation in order to make decisions about the nature of the preservation program appropriate for their own institutions. The Commission might well work with the Association of Research Libraries and other organizations which provide continuing education for senior administrators to assure that appropriate educational opportunities and materials exist for these purposes.

Finally, practicing preservation personnel require a different kind of educational support. We suggest that the Commission appoint a new Task Force to plan a series of continuing education programs for the practicing preservationist. The series might extend over two or three years, include topical as well as

training sessions, and emphasize management training for preservation administrators.

16. THAT DEVELOPMENT OF A "NATIONAL PRESERVATION MANAGEMENT STRATEGY" DESERVES CONSIDERATION BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

Comment: A number of those interviewed felt that the Commission's current programs, while addressing important issues, have evolved without a comprehensive overview or master plan. Several suggested that a national strategy for preservation be developed. Although the Committee was divided on this issue, we recommend that the Board take the idea of a "national preservation management strategy" under consideration, at least to the extent of exploring the advantages and disadvantages of developing such a strategy and determining whether the Commission is the appropriate organization to pursue its development.

The terms and the emphases used in discussions of this issue were not consistent across interviews. Some focussed on a "national plan," others on a "national strategy." One element common to several statements was the view that the process used to create a plan would result in greater participation, a "buying in," by the larger community in support of preservation. One correspondent put it this way:

> ...the development of a national preservation management strategy could identify the nation's greatest and most urgent preservation needs, could help shape the preservation grant programs of government agencies and private foundations,

and could co-opt (and possibly increase) institutional resources committed to preservation services.

There are advantages and disadvantages in pursuing the development of a national preservation strategy. The benefits of such a plan can be viewed in terms of process or of product. When concerned individuals exchange views about problems and solutions during a series of meetings and then take action as deemed appropriate by the individual participants, through the process itself the application of a plan is achieved (a result which the Commission itself can claim to have achieved). When, on the other hand, meetings are viewed as the means for developing a formal plan that can be adopted by whoever wishes to participate, what results can be a rigid product.

Depending on local reaction to such plans, the result may or may not lead to coherent action. The danger is that a rigid plan may insist too strongly on a particular path and limit opportunities for funding innovative programs not envisioned or emphasized in the plan. How these options should be weighed did not become clear to the Committee in the course of our work, but the issue arose repeatedly during our review and deserves some further consideration by the Board.

17. THAT THE COMMISSION DEVELOP A CLEARER RATIONALE FOR BOARD MEMBERSHIP.

Comment: In regard to Board membership, the Committee heard a

number of concerns about the Board's present selection procedures. There appears to be no obvious rationale for appointing members to the Board, beyond factors such as prestige, status, and influence. There are perceptions that the Board is dominated by members from the East Coast and is self-perpetuating through an "old boy" network. Such criticism may or may not be justified, but we agreed with a number of our informants that while finding the Board to be generally effective, some clearer outline of Board membership qualifications should be developed.

The frequently stated objection that those most actively involved in the practice and techniques of preservation are not represented on the Board or adequately represented on many of the Commission's committees is understandable. It should be clear that the Board is responsible for the Commission itself, not for the entirety of the nation's preservation efforts. The question of which individuals with what expertise should be involved in the Commission's work obviously depends on what is being investigated and what is projected as the desired outcome. Where the mechanics of preservation are the principal concern, those closest to the work should of course be consulted (as the Commission has often done in its contractual arrangements). Nevertheless, the Committee believes that it would be unwise to constitute the Board with members of the practicing preservation community primarily in mind.

18. THAT THE COMMISSION EVALUATE AND REVISE THE ROLE AND MEMBERSHIP OF THE NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL ON PRESERVATION.

Comment: The Committee discussed the Commission's organizational structure at length, with much of the discussion centered on the National Advisory Council on Preservation. When originally created, the Advisory Council was intended to provide a link between library, archival, academic, and scholarly organizations and the Commission itself. Whatever the reasons, the Council has failed to function as originally planned. The major objections are that the Council has no real advisory function and that its members are not equally qualified to give appropriate advice.

The views of the Committee concerning the Council ranged from the view that the Council should simply be abolished, with its function being assumed by an expanded Board of Directors, to the belief that the Advisory Council could indeed be useful were it to be reconstituted and given a specific charge, meeting annually over a 2-3 day period to review the Commission's current programs, and making concrete recommendations to the Board for future activities and direction. One Committee member suggested that the Advisory Council would be more effective if it were comprised only of individuals who have a direct professional involvement in preservation and access activities, and who represent different categories of concern--research librarians, college and school librarians, administrators of state libraries and historical societies, conservationists, archivists, scholars, publishers, library school deans, information technologists--but we reached no consensus on that suggestion. Appointing members based on area of

concern or expertise would of course not preclude representation from the major library groups, but, whatever the structure and constituency, the Council will be little more than what one member called "show case stuff" unless and until it is given a serious advisory role, and possibly given some financial support from the Commission for the Advisory Council's meetings and activities.

19. THAT THE COMMISSION RETAIN ITS ADVISORY COMMITTEES CONCERNED WITH PROCESS ISSUES (TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT, TEXT AND IMAGE PRESERVATION, ETC.) AND RESTRUCTURE THOSE COMMITTEES CONCERNED WITH DISCIPLINARY AREAS.

Comment: The committees that focus on process (e.g., Technology Assessment, Text and Image Preservation) were generally seen by our respondents as more valuable and effective than those that deal with the potential products of preservation. A number of reservations were expressed about the Commission's scholarly advisory committees, particularly questioning the value of their advice on preservation selection in specific disciplines. The Committee agreed that scholarship within the various disciplines is so diverse and so specialized that no group of a dozen or so individuals can comprehensively advise on selection priorities in any but the most general (and obvious) sense. Thus the charge to such committees--"to consider preservation selection"--raises unrealistic expectations that are exceedingly difficult to fulfill.

Nonetheless, the scholarly advisory committees have performed important functions in the initial period of Commission activities, and the need to involve scholars in the work of the Commission

continues to be obvious. Mechanisms for scholarly engagement in the process deserve the Board's further thought and attention.

20. THAT THE COMMISSION REMAIN AN ORGANIZATION SUPPORTED BY SPONSORS, RATHER THAN CHANGE TO A MEMBERSHIP ORGANIZATION.

Comment: The issue of whether the Commission should remain a sponsorship organization or change to a membership group was discussed at length by the Committee, and our view of this issue is unanimous. We believe that in large measure the Commission's success in the past five years has been due to its being free from obligatory adherence to the requests of a "membership," and we urge that this freedom be maintained, despite the requests of some of the sponsors. We strongly recommend that the Commission avoid even the slightest suggestion that it is a membership organization. We encourage the Board to make every effort to expand the number of institutions that provide financial support, but in so doing to make it clear that such institutions are sponsors and not members.

EPILOGUE

Polish writer Stanislaw Lem's 1971 futurist novel, Memoirs Found in a Bathtub (Harcourt Brace 1986), describes an historic blight of papyralysis, an epidemic which chiefly attacked enormous "data storage centers called li-brees," caused the Great Collapse of Neogene civilization, and completely destroyed the cultural achievements of the Neogene past and threatened its society with total dissolution.

> No one knows exactly when and where the papyralysis epidemic broke out. Most likely, it happened in the desert regions of a land called Ammer-Ka, where the first spaceport was built. The people of that time did not immediately realize the scope of the impending danger. And yet we cannot accept the harsh judgment delivered by so many subsequent historians, that these were a frivolous people (p. 1-2).

Centuries earlier, fictionally speaking, we today speak of the "slow fires" of paper decay and the "fast fires" of video image deterioration, but with growing awareness and attention which harsh historians cannot dismiss as frivolous. The Commission on Preservation and Access over the past five years has played an increasingly important role in developing that awareness and in addressing many of the issues of preservation and access. That so much more remains to be done and that the recognition of those needs is now so well known is itself an indication of the importance of the Commission's continued work.